

**invariable**

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# invariable

by [TumblingBackpacks](#)

## Summary

Severus gasps, pushing himself up against the wall, trying to gain distance where there isn't; there's sharp, unforgiving teeth, clawing, ripping, tearing at his throat, at the remaining shreds of his coherence. He might be crying, he thinks hysterically, from a distant part of his mind that gets thoroughly smothered and ignored amidst his panic.

In which fifteen-year-old Severus Snape meets his end at the jaws of a werewolf, and wakes up on the Hogwarts Express for his First Year at Hogwarts. He does not cope well.

### **backpacks's whumptober 2023**

No. 3: "Make it stop."

### **second chance(s) scorned**

Severus Snape gets a second chance. He's not really interested in taking it.

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Severus startled.

With a yelp, he fell from his seat, the light streaming in from the window of the train compartment shining in his eyes. Lily peered down at him, concerned.

Seat. Window. Train Compartment.

And Lily...much younger than she had looked when he had seen her the other day.

“Did you have a nightmare?”

*Nightmare...*

It was an inadequate word for what he'd seen – what he'd *experienced*. Nightmares did not last for years on end, depicting years of bullying and harassment and diminishing hope until meeting a grisly end.

Oh, god.

He reached a – far too small – hand up to his neck, trailing up to his cheek; it was smooth, undamaged. There were no scars he could feel that would indicate being mauled by a werewolf, yet his racing heartbeat kept him convinced that it *had* happened to some extent.

It *had*, he's sure.

Severus had – his mind stuttered over the realization – he had *died*.

“Sev?” came Lily's voice again, worry coloring her tone. He attempted to form a reply, taking a deep breath and trying to *focus*. Lily's hand was on his back. Severus was still halfway on the floor.

“Mnnh,” was his best attempt at words.

Still, he manages to pull himself back into his seat, Lily rubbing a hand on his back while trying to question what had happened. Her questions lacked tact, and he'd rather she sat in silence, but he can't make the words to say as much, so she keeps prodding until two boys come knocking.

It happens just as he dreamed – *remembered* – with Lily carrying the conversation right up until Potter brings up Gryffindor and their chivalry.

Memories of over five years of these very boys coming after him for ‘being a Slytherin’ and therefore ‘deserving it’ was *far* chafed at him at Potter's words – their behavior had been (would be) far from the values that Gryffindors preached. He couldn't help the scoff that came out of his mouth.

“What?” Potter says, immediately looking over him with a critical, distasteful eye. “Got a problem with Gryffindor?”

*Pick your battles*, whispers a rational part of his mind.

Severus shakes his head. Potter is mollified, somewhat.

Lily picks up on the sudden change in mood and interjects, “I’m Lily, by the way,” then waves a hand at him, “and this is Sev.”

Black gives him a once-over. “So does he not talk...?”

“He does!” Lily immediately defends, and Severus feels warmed by how quick it was. It felt like they had been getting into more arguments as of late, where she would get mad at *him* for being upset at Black and Potter’s behavior. “He just...” Lily hesitates, sparing a side-glance at him, “...shy,” she finishes lamely.

“Right,” Black says flatly. He doesn’t look like he believes it, but Severus is too focused on making sure the boy *keeps his distance* to care much about whether Black believes them or not. “Well, like *this one* already said – he’s James Potter and I’m Sirius Black.”

He extends a hand to Lily, who offers hers in return to shake, then he’s facing Severus, and suddenly, Severus is stuck with grey eyes and—

*So eager to crash our meetings, Snivellus? Tell you what, I let you in, just this once. All you have to do is press this knot on the Whomping Willow...*

—when Black reaches for him, Severus recoils.

(It’s just for a handshake, he doesn’t realize. No, he’s too busy flashing forward to an expression far more malicious, an experience far too raw for him to have processed, much less *adjusted to*.)

“Don’t – *don’t*—!” Severus gasps, pushing himself up against the wall, trying to gain distance where there isn’t; there’s sharp, unforgiving teeth, clawing, ripping, *tearing* at his throat, at the remaining shreds of his coherence. He might be crying, he thinks hysterically, from a distant part of his mind that gets thoroughly smothered and ignored amidst his unwavering panic. “Please – please, I don’t—!”

“Sev? Sev—!”

“I don’t want to die,” and the words are weak; broken and whispered and helpless.

All the things that Severus had tried so hard not to show – they’re all out in the open now.

*Pathetic.*

For all that he wanted everything—his father, the Marauders, his dormmates, the unfairness and injustice of it all – to end, he had not considered suicide; he did not want to die. He wanted it to be *over*, but not for himself. He just – he wanted everyone else to leave him be; backing off, giving him a reprieve that he had so desperately clawed for, sought after, hoped and dreamed and prayed that someday, *someday*, it would get better, life would improve.

But it hadn't.

Each passing day had gotten harder to manage, and he started to lose the will to continue. But he *hated* the cloying, oppressive feeling of helplessness, so he had channeled it all into fury, hit back where the world had hit him in the hopes that one day, eventually, they would stop, realize he was stronger now, and would leave him alone. But that day had never come, and he wasn't so strong after all. Not compared to the unrestrained might of a Dark creature with the intent to kill.

He's heaving now – taking ineffective, gasping breaths for air that does not come. Tremors overtake his limbs, but his head feels strangely light. His vision blurs. Voices are indistinct and rapid:

“Oh, my god. What did you *do*?”

“I didn't do anything! He just *did that*—”

“Merlin, he looks *sick*...”

“You *hurt* him! Sev – Sev—!”

“He's – he's faking! C'mon – I didn't—!”

“Does it *look* like he's faking, mate?”

“Make it stop! You – you – ugh! Sev...”

He focuses on the hands squeezing on his wrists. But. But – there's a ghost of pressure on his neck – he has to tell himself it didn't happen, wouldn't happen, might have happened?

No, no, *no*. *Focus*.

Hands on his wrists, fingers wrapping tight. Warm. Solid. Grounding. *Real*.

Severus doesn't know how long he stays that way – Lily's hands moving to grasp his own, Potter and Black hovering over him – shaking like a leaf while mentally berating himself for it.

*Far too long*, he decides, when he is cognizant enough to properly register his surroundings again. He has barely managed to get his breathing to even out and has no explanations to offer for his display.

Their compartment is thick with tension. Lily is still glaring at the other boys, blaming them; Black is looking upset at being blamed for causing it; Potter seems incredibly awkward at the entire ordeal. Severus just wants them all to stop *looking at him*.

“I'm *fine*,” Severus forces out. “It's just...”

He doesn't have the words for his sudden lapse in respiratory functions, so settles for waving a hand at himself. Silence persists for several more moments before Potter takes it upon

himself to break it.

“So...” Potter says, directing his attention to Lily. “What House do you want to be in?”

“Oh!” Lily brightens. “Sev said me and him should be in Slytherin together!”

“*Slytherin?*” Potter looks like he wants to say much more, and far ruder things, but refrains after casting a wary glance at Severus. Severus bristles, and Potter takes on a distinctly uncomfortable expression. He settles, somewhat. “But – *why?*”

“My mum was in Slytherin,” Severus says; softly, because he doesn’t have the same pride in the House that he used to. It used to be a symbol of greatness and hope – where his mother had learned magic, something that would shape him into a person powerful enough to not be pushed down by his pa.

But instead it had pushed *him* down – made him out to be lesser because he wasn’t Severus *Prince*, pureblood and rich and important; he was just Severus Snape, halfblood and dirt-poor from a muggle town of nowhere, and who cared if he was *brilliant* if no one would spare him the time of day?

“So was mine. Both my parents, actually,” Black says, expression twisting in distaste. “That’s why *I* want to be anywhere *but* Slytherin.”

Another time, years ago, Severus would have replied to that with something angry, snapped to defend his beloved, idealized place in Slytherin. He can’t make himself do it now.

“Maybe we can all be Hufflepuffs, then,” Severus says, and is so, so thankful for Lily taking his hand and squeezing it. It makes him feel childish, but he *needs* this; a moment to be childish; a moment to indulge in comfort after the chaos of his stupid, irrational (actually *very* rational, in his opinion, all things considered) fears; a moment to properly *breathe* before the boys who made his life at Hogwarts hell declare him *the Enemy* for the House he’d been Sorted to.

That startles a laugh out of Black. “*Hufflepuff?*”

“What’s wrong with Hufflepuff?” Lily asks, which sets Black off on another peal of laughter.

She turns to James Potter, who raises his hands in surrender. “Nothing, I guess. It’s just...it’s *Hufflepuff.*”

“Huh?” Lily puffs up angrily at the lack of a proper answer. “But what’s—?”

“How about,” Potter says, talking over her, “let’s all be *Gryffindors*, yeah?”

Black grins. “Yeah!”

Lily doesn’t let up. “*But what’s wrong with—?*”

“My mum’s going to be *fuming mad*,” Black continues. “It’d be *so* worth it, though.”

“*Urgh!*” Lily lets go of Severus’s hand to throw both of hers in the air in frustration.

He doesn’t even get upset at it because – well, fair enough.

She leans over to say lowly, scornfully, “Forget *Gryffindor*.”

But not low enough, because Potter replies, “Just ‘Puffs, then?”

And Lily sets off again: “*What is wrong with Hufflepuff?*”

“It’s better than Slytherin,” Black responds. His tone is light, meant to be teasing, but Severus can’t help the sense of dread sinking in his stomach. In just a few short hours, he would be marked as *the Enemy*, and he’d have to live this all over again. He wouldn’t even make it to sixteen.

*That has to change*, Severus decides.

The Sorting Hat had not placed him in Slytherin without restraint, but Slytherin had not welcomed him. It had been a fight to *survive*, more than it had ever been a fight to *succeed*. He no longer knows if he is desperate to put up that fight once more.

If he could convince the Sorting Hat to place him otherwise, perhaps he could find safety in a House like Ravenclaw. Potter and Black wouldn’t take issue with him for *that*, would they? So if Severus could just – no, not could; he *had to* – convince the Sorting Hat, then he would be *safe*.

(Because, if he couldn’t even change the mind of a *Hat*, how could he influence anyone else’s?)

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Sirius Black is Sorted into Gryffindor.

So is Lily.

Nothing that had happened on the train seemed to have made a difference.

Still, there’s a tentative hope that has yet to be crushed as he walks up to the stool when “Snape, Severus” is called. If he can change *something*, anything at all—

Then, the Sorting Hat is placed atop his head, and he is desperately thinking: *I want to be safe. I want to be better. I want to be strong enough to defend myself. I want to be powerful enough to not be messed with. I want to **be someone** outside of this hell-hole of a school. I want, I’m going to, I **will**—*

Because, even in desperation, Severus has been more ambition than wit, more cunning than brave, and more resourceful than loyal.

So, without further consideration, the Sorting Hat shouts: “SLYTHERIN!”

It doesn't take more than a glance to register the disappointment on Black's face, and he can almost imagine the distrust brewing: *I guess he was a snake after all. What a shame.*

*Is that the justification Black had used, Severus wonders, before sending me off to a werewolf?*

Severus walks to the table like he had the first time, taking a seat next to Lucius Malfoy, much to the prefect's mild distaste and curious interest. Severus had asked about it once, right before Lucius had graduated. Lucius had admitted that he recognized Severus as a poor, probably-muggleborn, but had been intrigued by the way Severus had broken past social barriers to sit beside him. Severus had not admitted that was because he recognized Lucius as someone who held wealth and power, and he desperately wanted someone like that to protect him.

Lily waves to him from the Gryffindor table, still bright and happy and naive. She doesn't see anything wrong with being in different Houses. She doesn't see the issue of her being a Gryffindor and him being a Slytherin while trying to maintain a friendship. She doesn't see any problems with Hogwarts or the Wizarding World – *yet*.

But she will.

*Everyone* has. *Everyone will.*

And *everyone* is more than Severus can change.



## End Notes

Can Severus change things? Perhaps. :)

Does he believe he can change things? No.

(Mostly because he's been given absolutely NO time to deal with anything.)

James and Sirius are actually nicer here than the first time around, but since this is Severus's POV after years of harassment, he's going to be interpreting their actions in the worst way possible (in anticipation for the what they would/have done to him in the future-past; also because Severus does not have any healthy ways to cope with anything).

UP NEXT: ends unanswered (Regulus&Severus)

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